

was observable the whole time. Hence, though a conductor, and one capable of exerting chemical action on the tin, was used, yet, not being an *electrolyte*, not the slightest effect of an electrical current could be observed (682).

658. From this it seems apparent that the peculiar character and condition of an electrolyte is *essential* in one part of the voltaic circuit; and its nature being considered, good reasons appear why it and it alone should be effectual. An electrolyte is always a compound body: it can conduct, but only whilst decomposing. Its conduction depends upon its decomposition and the *transmission of its particles* in directions parallel to the current; and so intimate is this connection, that if their transition be stopped, the current is stopped also; if their course be changed, its course and direction changes with them; if they proceed in one direction, it has no power to proceed in any other than a direction invariably dependent on them. The particles of an electrolytic body are all so mutually connected", are in such relation with each other through their whole extent in the direction of the current, that if the last is not disposed of, the first is not at liberty to take up its place in the new combination which the powerful affinity of the most active metal tends to produce; and then the current itself is stopped; for the dependencies of the current and the decomposition are so mutual, that whichever be originally determined, *i.e.* the motion of the particles or the motion of the current, the other is invariable in its concomitant production and its relation to it.

659. Consider, then, water as an electrolyte and also as an oxidising body. The attraction of the zinc for the oxygen is greater, under the circumstances, than that of the oxygen for the hydrogen; but in combining with it, it tends to throw into circulation a current of electricity in a certain direction. This direction is consistent (as is found by innumerable experiments)

with the transfer of the hydrogen from the zinc towards the platina, and the transfer in the opposite direction of fresh oxygen from the platina towards the zinc; so that the current *can pass* in that one line, and, whilst it passes, can consist with and favour the renewal of the conditions upon the surface of the zinc, which at first determined both the combination and circulation. Hence the continuance of the action there, and the continuation of the current. It therefore appears quite as essential that there should be an electrolyte in the circuit, in order that the action may be transferred forward, in a *certain constant direction*, as that there should be an oxidising or other